

WE CLAIM:

1. A method for providing services to a client system in a distributed computing network, comprising:

receiving a registration request at a service manager from a service provider, the service provider
5 being configured to provide a service in the network;

storing in memory an available service proxy corresponding to the service implemented at the service provider, the available service proxy comprising executable code and including an interface defining
10 methods provided within the implemented service;

receiving a service request from the client system including service selection information;

comparing the service selection information to the defined methods of the available service proxy; and

15 if a match is determined in the comparing, transferring the available service proxy to the requesting client system, wherein the client system is adapted for executing the available service proxy to initiate the implemented service.

2. The method of claim 1, further including determining on an at least periodic basis whether the service provider is providing the service and based on a non-active determination, removing the available service
5 proxy from the memory.

3. The method of claim 1, further including downloading and installing over a communications network a client agent on the client system adapted for executing to transmit the service request to the service manager.

4. The method of claim 1, further including after completion of the implemented service removing the available service proxy from the client system.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the transferred available service proxy is configured to collect client system data during execution and further including receiving and storing the client system information.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the implemented service includes patch selection, delivery, and installation and further including providing the client system data to the service provider for use in the implemented service.

7. A service provider system for distributing services in a distributed computing environment, comprising:

a service information store for storing client system information including software and hardware implementation data for client computer networks; and

a service manager linked to the service information store and to a communications network configured for obtaining the client system information over the communications network and for transferring the client system information to the service information store,

the service manager including a service deployment tool adapted for registering service providers by storing available service proxies in memory and for deploying selected ones of the available service proxies over the communications network and further including a service selection tool adapted for filtering the available service proxies based on a service request received over

20 the communications network to identify the selected ones
for deployment, wherein the available service proxies
comprise an executable object with an interface defining
methods provided by implemented services at the service
providers.

5 8. The system of claim 7, further including a
client system linked to the communications network and
including a virtual service mechanism adapted for
transmitting service requests over the communications
network to the service manager and for receiving and
executing a one of the deployed available service proxies
transmitted in response to the transmitted service
request.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the virtual
service mechanism includes a client mechanism executing
to register the client system with the service manager as
a recipient for the distributed services.

5 10. The system of claim 8, further including a
service provider registered by the service manager and
comprising an implemented service corresponding to one of
the stored available service proxies, wherein during
execution of the one of the deployed available service
proxies the client system and the service provider are
communicatively linked to complete the distributed
service.

11. The system of claim 10, further including means
for removing the one of the deployed available service
proxies from the client system.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the implemented service comprises based on the client system information, selecting patches from a set of available patches for installation on the client system and installing the selected patches on the client system.

13. The system of claim 10, wherein the implemented service comprises analyzing the client system information to select operating system and application upgrades and installing the selected upgrades on the client system.

14. A patch and upgrade distribution method, comprising:

storing in memory a patch and upgrade delivery proxy comprising executable code and an interface defining requestable methods, wherein the patch and upgrade delivery proxy corresponds to an implemented patch and upgrade service;

registering a client server as a recipient for the implemented patch and upgrade service;

transferring the patch and upgrade delivery proxy to the client server for execution to initiate performance of the implemented patch and upgrade service at the client server; and

storing client system data obtained from the client server including configuration information for a client network served by the client server.

15. The method of claim 14, further including communicatively linking the client server and a service provider executing the implemented patch and upgrade service and transferring executable code and data between the client server and the service provider during the

performance of the patch and upgrade service at the client server.

16. The method of claim 14, further including during the performance of the patch and upgrade service, utilizing the client system data to select a patch or an upgrade and installing the selected patch or upgrade on
5 the client network.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the patch and upgrade service is configured to obtain confirmation input from an operator of the client server through a user interface displayed at the client server.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the patch and upgrade service is configured to automatically reboot portions of the client network affected by the installation of the selected patch or upgrade.

19. The method of claim 16, further including removing the transferred patch-and-upgrade proxy from the client server after completion of the performance of the patch and upgrade service at the client server.